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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

General and complete disarmament: establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia

Environment and sustainable development

Human rights questions

Letter dated 14 April 1999 from the Permanent Representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Ashgabat Declaration (see annex I) and the joint statement by the heads of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted at the meeting of heads of State held on 9 April 1999 in Ashgabat (annex II).

* A/54/50.

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We should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annexes circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 39, 50, 76 (c), 101 and 117 of the preliminary list.

(*Signed*) Akmaral **Arystanbekova**
Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Zamira **Eshmambetova**
Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Aksoltan **Ataev**
Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Alisher **Vohidov**
Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations

Annex I

Ashgabat Declaration

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, mankind is confronted with serious ecological problems that are impeding its stable development. Environmental degradation is the result of the irrational use of natural resources.

The consequences of the Aral crisis have had a negative impact on the quality of life of the Central Asian population, and the problem of providing social protection and ensuring clean drinking water has become more acute.

The States of Central Asia have been giving constant attention to improving the situation in the region and enlisting the help of the international community in solving these problems. Together with international organizations and funds, a regional project, "Management of Water Resources and the Environment", is being implemented with the support of the International Ecological Fund and is designed to bring about a radical improvement in the use of water and other resources, enhance the effectiveness and culture of nature management in the region and improve the ecological situation in general.

At the same time, the efforts being made to solve the problems of the Aral Sea basin are insufficient.

We, the Presidents of the fraternal States of Central Asia — the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan,

Moved by the desire to ensure our peoples prosperity and confidence in the future,

Conscious of the need to develop joint measures in carrying out a regional strategy and specific actions for making rational use of the region's water resources, founded on ecosystem-based and integrated principles of water management,

Taking into account the fact that the water resources of the Aral Sea basin must be used in the interests of all parties with observance of the principles of good-neighbourliness and mutual interests,

Emphasizing the significance of the efforts by the States that established the Fund in strengthening cooperation concerning the problems of water-resource management and environmental protection, restoring the water ecosystem and preventing the pollution of transboundary waters,

Confirming the decisions adopted on the joint implementation of the Concrete Action Programme for the Problems of the Aral Sea,

Recognizing that well-informed public opinion is an important condition for concerted action under the ecological and socio-economic policy conducted in the region,

Acting in accordance with the firm determination to overcome jointly the consequences of the crisis and improve the ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin,

Declare that we shall:

Recognize the importance of an overall solution to the problems related to improving the social and ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin;

Strengthen, in the States of the region and their missions abroad, activities designed to draw the attention of the international community to and attract resources and the potential

assistance of donor countries, funds and organizations for the implementation of programmes and projects relating to the problems of the Aral Sea basin;

Secure all possible assistance and support in the implementation, under the auspices of the World Bank and the International Ecological Fund, of the project "Management of Water Resources and the Environment in the Aral Sea Basin";

Accord greater attention to solving the problems of the mountainous areas where the rivers flowing into the Aral Sea basin originate;

Carry out a set of measures and projects in priority areas to provide social protection to the population living in the Aral Sea basin;

Step up work aimed at combating desertification and the pollution of transboundary waters;

Assist international organizations and institutes in their efforts to implement programmes and projects relating to the problems of the Aral Sea basin;

Promote, through educational and other programmes, efforts aimed at better informing the population about the urgent problems of environmental protection, rational nature management and improving the living environment for current and future generations.

For the Republic of Kazakhstan:
(*Signed*) N. A. **Nazarbaev**

For the Kyrgyz Republic:
(*Signed*) A. A. **Akayev**

For the Republic of Tajikistan:
(*Signed*) E. S. **Rakhmonov**

For Turkmenistan:
(*Signed*) S. A. **Niyazov**

For the Republic of Uzbekistan:
(*Signed*) I. A. **Karimov**

Ashgabat, 9 April 1999

Annex II

Joint Statement by the Heads of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekis a

A meeting of the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan took place in Ashgabat on 8 and 9 April 1999.

The heads of State discussed the questions of restoring the ecosystem of the Aral Sea basin and the work carried out in this area by the foundation for the Salvation of the Aral Sea. The Ashgabat Declaration, setting forth the results of the discussion was signed (see annex I).

During the meeting, the heads of State conducted a comprehensive analysis of the state and prospects for the development of cooperation between the countries of the region in major policy areas, mutually advantageous economic ties, and social and cultural life as well as a thorough exchange of views on pressing problems of international relations.

On the basis of the results of the meeting held, the heads of State,

Determined to promote the further development and strengthening of existing relations based on all-round, equitable and mutually advantageous cooperation in the spirit of the friendship of their peoples, who have age-old historic roots and common culture, customs and traditions,

Emphasizing the high level of the friendly, equitable and mutually advantageous relations in all areas of inter-State relations, ensuring security and stability in the region,

Expressing the desire to strengthen further the independence of the States and their political and economic security, enhance the well-being of the peoples and promote the dynamic development of national economies on the basis of full and effective use of natural resources and the development of regional ties,

Emphasizing their commitment to the principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, the founding documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and mutually providing all-round support in questions relating to the prevention of threats to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of their countries,

Regarding as a major task the work of meeting the needs of the future generations of their citizens and imbuing young people with a spirit of patriotism, devotion and loyalty to higher humanistic and moral values, respect for the achievements of previous generations, a sense of responsibility for the fate of the fatherland and fraternal, good-neighbourly relations between the peoples of the region directed towards the new century,

Have declared the following:

1. Since Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan gained their independence, relations among them have been developing in accordance with the principles of traditional friendship and trust, sovereign equality and mutual advantage, based on long-term partnership and in keeping with the national interests of all five States. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, they believe that it is necessary to give new impetus to the development of mutually advantageous partnership on an equal footing and to the broadening of cooperation in the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.

2. The sides confirmed their commitment to openness and broad cooperation with a view to ensuring international peace, stability and security at the regional and global levels. The sides are prepared to provide assistance in order to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations and other international organizations in maintaining universal peace and security, preventing conflicts and ensuring the internal and external security of States.

3. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan consider the promotion of a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, the establishment of peace and accord in that country and the transition to the implementation of programmes to rehabilitate Afghanistan to be one of the most important tasks of regional politics.

The heads of State commended the latest efforts of the United Nations, within the framework of the Ashgabat process, to take practical steps to resolve the Afghan conflict. The heads of State attach great importance to the consultations being held within the framework of the "Group of neighbours and friends of Afghanistan (6 + 2)", and have appealed to the Afghan parties actively to pursue the process of a political settlement. The sides also welcome the efforts of other States to this end, including the initiative of Uzbekistan to convene a special meeting of the "6 + 2 Group" in order to support the coordinated efforts of the United Nations and the goodwill of the participants in the ongoing inter-Afghan dialogue.

4. The sides reaffirm that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia is in keeping with the requirements and interests of national, regional and global security.

5. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan shall take concerted action to counteract terrorism, all forms of political, national or religious extremism and any other attempts to change the political system or social order through non-constitutional means, or violate a State's territorial integrity, which pose a threat to the life and peace of the population and undermine the moral foundations of society.

6. Recognizing their special responsibility, on the eve of the third millennium, for the well-being of future generations, the heads of State shall consolidate their efforts to combat transboundary organized crime and illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances, as well as contraband and illegal arms trafficking.

7. The heads of State reaffirmed the steadfast commitment of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to civil rights and liberties and to the democratic values embodied in the universally recognized norms of international law and the basic principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Presidents noted their agreement that the democratic development of society is a complex, multi-stage process that takes account of the historical traditions, customs, cultures and spiritual values of the peoples of the Central Asian region.

8. The Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, considering that water has always been a highly important component in relations among neighbours in the region, agreed that water resources should be developed in a sound manner that protects the ecosystem and does not cause mutual damage, with due regard for the interests of all parties concerned and in accordance with the principles of good-neighbourliness and mutual advantage. Such an approach will help raise the level of agro-industrial production, which is in keeping with the objectives of the United Nations food strategy for the twenty-first century.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan confirmed the need for concerted efforts to prevent environmental disasters and natural phenomena that threaten the security and means of livelihood of their populations.

9. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are focusing their attention on the development and further effective operation of the Transcaucasian Eurasian and the Trans-Asian transport corridors and the elaboration of an agreed tariff policy that conforms to international practice, since these corridors are a means of broadening trade and economic cooperation between the States of the region and the countries of Asia and Europe.

10. The sides noted the importance of improving the development and production of gas, petroleum and other natural resources in their countries, and of the need to take urgent measures to carry out joint projects for the laying of pipelines and construction of electric power lines for the transport of sources of energy to world markets. They emphasized that the diversification of their States' exports was fully in keeping with their strategic goals, and would enable each State to take its rightful place in the system of international relations and the strengthening of the international economy.

The sides unanimously expressed their satisfaction with the results of the meeting, which took place in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust.

The heads of State noted that the constructive and fruitful talks had substantially contributed to the development and strengthening of friendship among peoples and to broad cooperation in all areas.

President Saparmurat Niyazov expressed his cordial thanks to the leaders of the fraternal neighbouring States for their friendly support and good wishes for the people of Turkmenistan.

Presidents Nursultan Nazarbaev, Askar Akaev, Emomali Rakhmonov and Islam Karimov thanked the people of Turkmenistan and President Saparmurat Niyazov for their warm and hearty welcome and hospitality.

(*Signed*) N. **Nazarbaev**
President of Kazakhstan

(*Signed*) A. **Akaev**
President of Kyrgyzstan

(*Signed*) E. **Rakhmonov**
President of Tajikistan

(*Signed*) N. **Niyazov**
President of Turkmenistan

(*Signed*) I. **Karimov**
President of Uzbekistan

Ashgabat, 9 April 1999